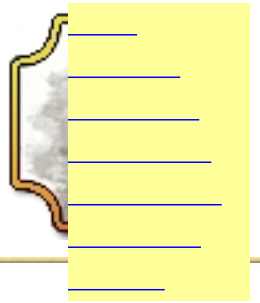


## Character Class

# Knight

By Skip Williams



*This column aims to provide players with tips on creating effective and interesting characters of various types. Whether you're a beginning player creating your very 1st character or an experienced gamer looking to put some punch into an old standby, this column is for you!*

## Assets

The knight class from *Player's Handbook II* offers players a chance to thrash foes and do it with panache. A knight can dominate the battlefield, blocking foes' progress, forcing them into personal combat, or manipulating them in other ways. A knight also can support and protect allies in various exceptional ways. On the downside, a knight can be vainglorious, inflexible, and domineering. A well-played knight is a valuable ally, even if she's a little full of herself.

The knight enjoys superior combat ability and a host of other useful powers. Here's a look at what you gain when you choose a knight:



- **High Hit Points:** The knight's 12-sided hit dice give you a grand capacity to absorb damage. You can take a beating and keep right on going.
- **Good Armor Class:** A knight can wear any kind of armor and use any kind of shield (except a tower shield), which usually gives the character an impressive Armor Class. High Armor Class combined with high hit points makes a knight a tough opponent indeed.
- **Good Attack Bonus:** A knight's base attack bonus is +1 per knight level, which is the best in the game. Knights can dish out damage as well as they can take it.
- **Good Will Saves:** A knight uses the best progression for Will saves (see Table 3--1 in the *Player's Handbook*). This helps the knight resist most effects that attack the mind or spirit.
- **Good Weapon Selection:** A knight can use any simple or martial weapon, which gives the knight access to some of the best weapons in the game.
- **Courtly Grace:** Knights need fairly high Charisma scores to take best advantage of their class features.

This makes knights good at winning friends and influencing people, which can be handy when fighting isn't practical or desirable.

- **Knight's Challenge:** Starting at 1st level, a knight gains the power to call out a foe and gain various advantages in combat. The subject of the challenge must meet certain requirements as noted in the class description.

As the knight gains levels in the class, these advantages become more potent. The knight can use this ability a number of times per day equal to half her knight class level + her Charisma bonus (minimum once per day). Each of the effects described below consumes one daily use of the knight's challenge ability.

At 1st level, a knight can issue a fighting challenge against a single foe as a swift action. The knight gets a boost from the challenge and gains a +1 morale bonus on Will saves and a +1 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls against the challenged foe. If the foe defeats the knight (by reducing her to 0 hit points or less), the knight loses two uses of her knight's challenge ability because of the blow to her ego. The effect of a fighting challenge lasts for a number of rounds equal to 5 + your Charisma bonus (if any).

At 7th level, the bonus from this ability increases to +2. At 13th level, it rises to +3. At 19th level, it increases to +4.

Starting at 4th level, a knight can issue a test of mettle. This is a general challenge to all foes within 100 feet. Affected creatures must make Will saves (DC 10 + 1/2 knight level + the knight's Cha modifier). Creatures that fail this save are forced to attack the knight with their ranged or melee attacks (or spells or special attacks) in preference over other available targets. Using this power is a swift action.

If the knight is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points by any opponent forced to attack her through this ability, she experiences a burst of confidence (from facing a slew of foes) and an additional use of her knight's challenge ability for the current day.

Starting at 8th level, a knight can issue a call to battle, which makes her an inspiring figure to an ally. As a swift action, the knight grants one ally an extra save against a fear effect (after failing the initial save against the effect). The ally gains a bonus on the extra save equal to the knight's Charisma bonus (if any). If the second save succeeds, the ally gains the benefits of a successful save against the fear effect.

Starting at 12th level, a knight can issue a daunting challenge as a swift action. Like a test of mettle, this is a general challenge to all foes within 100 feet. Affected creatures must make Will saves (DC 10 + 1/2 knight level + the knight's Cha modifier). Creatures that fail this save are shaken.

- **Bond of Loyalty:** Starting at 16th level, a knight gains a bond of loyalty. This allows the knight to attempt a second saving throw if she fails a saving throw against any mind-affecting attack or effect. If the second save succeeds, the knight gains the benefits of a successful save against the mind-affecting effect. Using this power is a free action.
- **Loyal Beyond Death:** Starting at 20th level, a knight becomes loyal beyond death. As a free action, she can act for one round even when reduced to –10 hit points or less, provided that her body remains more or less intact.
- **Mounted Combat:** At 2nd level, a knight gains Mounted Combat as a bonus feat.
- **Shield Block:** Also at 2nd level, a knight can fend off attacks from a single foe with her shield. This power

works something like the Dodge feat. The knight designates the foe when she acts (this does not require an action). The knight's shield bonus against the designated foe increases by 1. The extra shield bonus from this ability increases to +2 at 11th level and +3 at 20th level.

- **Bulwark of Defense:** Starting at 3rd level, a knight gains a limited power to hold foes in place. Any opponent that begins a turn in the area the knight threatens treats all the squares the knight threatens as difficult terrain (movement costs are doubled in those squares).
- **Armor Mastery:** Starting at 4th level, a knight can ignore the speed reduction for wearing medium armor. Starting at 9th level, a knight can ignore the speed reduction for wearing heavy armor.
- **Bonus Feats:** At 5th level a knight can choose a bonus feat from a short list given in the class description. The knight gains additional bonus feats from the list at 10th level and again at 15th level.
- **Vigilant Defender:** Also at 5th level, a knight can guard the space around her on the battlefield. If a foe tries to use the Tumble skill to move through the space the knight occupies or through the space the knight threatens without provoking an attack of opportunity, the DC for the tumble check increases by an amount equal to knight's class level.
- **Shield Ally:** Starting at 6th level, a knight can protect an adjacent ally from damage. The knight designates the ally to be protected as an immediate action. If the ally is subjected to a physical attack (melee or ranged) before the knight's next turn, the knight can absorb half the damage (if any) from the attack. The ally takes the other half of the damage.  
  
At 14th level, a knight can absorb all the damage the protected ally takes from a physical attack.
- **Impetuous Endurance:** Starting at 17th level, a knight does not automatically fail a saving throw on a roll of 1. She still fails the save, however, if her result fails to meet or exceed the save's DC.

## Weaknesses

The knight's many advantages come at a price. Here are a few things to consider when thinking about a knight character:

- **Low Skill Points:** At a mere two skill points per level, most knights don't have many skill ranks, even with quadruple skill points at 1st level.
- **Poor Fortitude and Reflex Saves:** Knights have the worst progression for Fortitude and Reflex and saves (see Table 3--1 in the Player's Handbook). Knights aren't great at getting out of the way when things get rough, nor can they easily shake off assaults that undermine their physical health.
- **Low Mobility:** A knight's reliance on heavy armor makes her a slow mover on the battlefield, though the armor mastery power makes this disadvantage disappear eventually.
- **Code of Conduct:** A knight must have a lawful good alignment and must always fight in an honorable

manner. The latter requirement forces the knight to forego several important combat advantages. For example, a knight cannot benefit from flanking a foe and cannot strike a flat-footed foe.

A knight who loses her lawful alignment loses all benefits from the knight's challenge ability (but can regain them by regaining her lawful alignment). A knight who fights with dishonor loses daily uses of her knight's challenge ability -- if she doesn't have enough uses remaining to pay the cost, she suffers combat and saving throw penalties for the rest of the day.

## Playing a Classy Knight

People who play great knights usually keep the following in mind:

### Lead and Protect

The only suitable place for you in a party is the front rank or even a step or two ahead of the main group. From there you can seek out fresh challenges and take the fight to the enemy when a battle starts. Your presence in the front rank also places you between the enemy and your less martial comrades -- who need your protection.

Be ready to lead with your head as well as your arm. You're already out in front of the party, so get in the habit of thinking about where the party should go and what your group should do next. Like any good general, know your companions and their capabilities. Look for ways to test your group's strengths. If your group learns that your ideas are usually good, they won't mind taking direction from you.

### Get Close

In a fight, come to grips with the foe as soon as you can. You can excel at ranged combat, but your true forte is melee combat, where you can use your bulwark of defense and vigilant defender powers to best advantage.

### Challenge Often

Don't forget your knight's challenge ability. You can use it as a swift action, so using it won't delay your entry into combat. You have limited uses of this power each day, so use it only for your most important fights. On the other hand, unused knight's challenges at the end of the day are wasted unless there's a chance you'll be attacked during the night -- then saving a use or two is a good idea, especially after you achieved enough class levels to have several knight's challenges available each day.

### Friends in Need

You're a ferocious opponent in combat, but you can't survive on your own. You also have abilities that allow you work with allies in unique ways.

**Other Fighting Characters:** If you have a fighting ally such as a fighter, ranger, or paladin, you have a great advantage. This character can watch your back when you're in melee. Work out a few basic strategies with this ally ahead of time. For example, the two of you might want fight shoulder to shoulder most of the time, to avoid getting flanked. Or, one of you (probably you) might want to pin the foe in place while the other tries to circumvent the opposition's front line and attack enemy spellcasters or leaders.

**The Party Scout:** Fast and stealthy characters such as rogues aren't honorable fighters, and you'd never stoop to

their tactics. On the other hand, these characters are invaluable for reconnaissance. You can't lead your group without information. These characters also can get into places you can't enter and can remove obstacles you can't overcome. So treat these characters with respect.

Remember that scouts often find trouble they can't handle, so be ready to stage a rescue when necessary.

Also remember that a scout can fight effectively alongside you, at least for a short time. Be ready to help rogue characters flank foes. You can't benefit from a flanking bonus without violating your code, but you can help an ally get a flanking bonus without incurring any penalties yourself.

**The Party's Arcane Spellcaster:** This character's spells are useful for clearing away weaker foes so you can concentrate on the real opposition. Occasionally, an arcane spell or two will be necessary to handle a foe you can't defeat yourself. An arcane spellcaster usually has poor Armor Class and very few hit points, so you must keep opposition away from the spellcaster -- there's no glory in losing an ally. If the enemy attacks your arcane spellcaster, your *shield ally* spell can help the character survive.

**The Party's Divine Spellcaster:** Get friendly and stay friendly with you party's cleric or druid. This character's healing spells can keep you on your feet as you fight valiantly.

## Some Key Equipment

As a knight, you'll rely heavily on your gear, so it pays to collect the right equipment. The essentials include:

- **Armor and Shield:** Buy the best you can afford, because you'll need that Armor Class. Plan to carry a shield (heavy or tower if you have the Tower Shield Proficiency feat). You'll have to skip the shield if you plan to use a two-handed weapon, but doing so negates your shield block ability.

Buying the best armor you can afford usually means using heavy armor. If you have medium armor mastery, however, the extra mobility you gain might prove worth the lower Armor Class, especially when fighting on foot.

Don't overlook other defensive items such as rings of protection and amulets of natural armor. Keep in mind that several lesser items that stack together give you better protection, and at a cheaper price, than one big item.

If you do a lot of wilderness adventuring, consider some backup armor, such as a suit of studded leather (or a mithral chain shirt if you can afford it) to wear at night. If you try to sleep in heavy armor, you'll have penalties the next day. If you sleep in your skivvies you'll be in trouble if you're attacked in the night.

- **Primary Melee Weapon:** Choose a martial or exotic weapon with good damage and ability to deal critical hits. A bastard sword or dwarven war ax is a great choice because you can wield them in one hand (if you take the right feat). This allows you great damage dealing ability while still getting the Armor Class benefits from a shield (and using your shield block ability). If you don't want to use up a feat on your weapon, it's hard to beat a longsword or battle ax. Both deal good damage and have extra capacity for inflicting critical hits.
- **Backup Melee Weapon:** Always have a light weapon -- or two -- handy. A light slashing weapon, such as a dagger or hand ax, can get you out of a tight spot -- for example, being swallowed whole by a big

monster (which might happen given your propensity for seeking out powerful foes). It also pays to have a hefty weapon on hand in case you lose your primary weapon or find that it isn't effective. Make sure this weapon deals a different kind of damage from your primary weapon. For example, if you normally use a bastard sword (a slashing weapon), consider a morningstar (which deals both bludgeoning and piecing damage) as a backup.

- **Ranged Weapon:** Your foes won't always be within melee reach. A ranged weapon also makes up nicely for your general lack of mobility early in your career. A composite bow is a great choice because you can spend a little extra money on it and get the benefit of your Strength bonus to damage.
  - **Personal Enhancement:** You can get a great deal of mileage out of an item that improves an ability score. A Strength item helps you in melee combat. A Dexterity boost helps with ranged attacks, defense, and initiative rolls. Improving Constitution gives you extra hit points and helps with your Fortitude saves. A Charisma boost helps with your knight's challenge ability.
- 

## About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

---

Based on the original **Dungeons & Dragons®** game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the **Dungeons & Dragons** game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison. **D&D**, **Dungeons & Dragons**, and **Forgotten Realms** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Wizards characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This material is protected under the laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction of or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental. This Wizards of the Coast game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit **[www.wizards.com/d20](http://www.wizards.com/d20)**. ©2001-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. Made in the U.S.A.

**Visit our website at [www.wizards.com/dnd](http://www.wizards.com/dnd)**